2009–2010

October 24, 2009

University of Toronto MacMillan Singers
Mark Vuorinen, conductor
Doreen Rao, director
Chris Dawes, piano

PROGRAM

I. How can I recognize my home?

Kust tunnen kodu — **Veljo Tormis** (b.1930)
Elizabeth Polese, soprano; Lynn McMurray, alto

Jaanilaul, from Calendar Songs — **Veljo Tormis**

On suuri sun rantas autius — **arr. Matti Hyökki** (b. 1946)
Lynn McMurray, alto

Midrilinnu mäng — **Adolf Vedro** (1890-1944)

Pärismaalase lauluke — **Veljo Tormis**
Étienne Levesque, frame drum

II. How can I find the spirit?

Keewaydin — **Harry Freedman** (1932-2005)
Julia Morson and Elizabeth Polese, sopranos;
Juliya Krisciunas and Sylvia Chouljian, altos;
Will Reid, tenor; Douglas Brenton, bass

Invocation, from Shaman Songs — **Gary Kulesha** (b.1954)

Onokenoga — **Mark Sirett** (b.1952)
Julia Morson, Elizabeth Polese and Sara Schabas, soprano; Anthony Varahidis, tenor;
Christopher Dawes and Étienne Levesque, percussion;
Elaine Choi, conductor

III. Distant and lonely, I shall never reach Cordoba

Suite de Lorca — **Einojuhani Rautavaara** (b.1928)
I. Cancion de jinete
II. El Grito
III. La luna asoma
IV. Malagueña

IV. I sing and cannot weep, God grant we be united

Es sang vor langen Jahren — **Arvo Pärt** (b.1935)

Michelle Siemens, mezzo-soprano; Madeline Kapp, violin; Emma Vachon-Tweney, viola

Ubi Caritas — **Imant Raminsh** (b.1943)

Alleluia — **Algirdas Martinaitis** (b.1950)

Timothy Wong, alto

Bogoroditse Djevo — **Arvo Pärt**

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Program Notes

Notes by Mark Vuorinen unless otherwise indicated

VELJO TORMIS (b. 1930)
Kust tunnen kodu

Kust tunnen kodu, comes from Veljo Tormis' *Two Estonian Runo Songs*. The Runo song creates a link between modern Estonia and the ancient shamanistic culture practiced by the Finno-Ugric peoples around the Gulf of Finland. Runo melodies are typically short single lines, performed in a call and response manner. Tormis has left the melody untouched in *Kust tunnen kodu* and devised a piano accompaniment to comment on the textual content.

Jaanilaul, from Calendar Songs

Jaanilaul comes from the final cycle of a series of songs called *Eesti kalendrilaulud* (Estonian Calendar songs). Each of the five groups of songs relates part of the Estonian farmer's annual work cycle. *Jaanilaul* comes from the cycle, which surrounds one of the most important holidays in the Estonian year, St. John's Eve, June 23. The melody and text for these songs are adapted from Herbert Tampere's important collection of folksongs. Tormis intensifies the simple, modal melody throughout the piece by layering it in as many as 12 individual lines, creating powerful tonal clusters.

arr. MATTI HYÖKKI (b. 1946)
On suuri sun rantas autius

On suuri sun rantas autius, is a well known, Finnish folk song arranged by Matti Hyökki. The forlorn loneliness of the Nordic climes is palpable in the simple melody and Hyökki's lamenting harmonic language.

ADOLF VEDRO (1890 - 1944)
Midrilinnu mäng

In contrast to *On suuri sun rantas autius*, in Adolf Vedro's light-hearted song, *Midrilinnu mäng*, the persistent pecking of the Midrija bird is heard in the lilting triple metre.

HARRY FREEDMAN (1932 - 2005)
Keewaydin

Written in 1971 for the choir of the Bishop Strachan School, Toronto, *Keewaydin* uses the names of Ontario locations in the Ojibwa language for their expressive sounds, and not their meaning. The choir is divided into 12 parts which, in time, support six soloists. Chanted text, improvisation, and non-pitched Sprechstimme make *Keewaydin* an exciting soundscape full of tonal imagery of Ontario's geography and First Nations.

GARY KULESHA (b. 1954)
Invocation, from Shaman Songs

Note by the composer:

The origin of this work involved using Inuit culture in some way. I was at first hesitant about this, as there is an inherent earthiness an Inuit poetry and legend that is in fairly radical opposition to both my music and my process. After reading some Inuit poems in translation, I finally decided to use several as departure points, and to write my own texts based upon them. Thus the texts for *Shaman Songs* are not genuine Inuit poems, but rather, my liberal adaptations. The Shaman, although, commonly thought of as a "medicine man" or a magician by Western culture, the Shaman is in fact a more complex figure. Most Shaman begin by having some sort of psychic disturbance in their youth. A senior Shaman recognizes this, and begins to tutor the young in the interpretation of the "other" world. He (or she) literally walks the edge between the worlds of the conscious and the unconscious or pre-conscious. There is no attempt in *Shaman Songs* to use musical material that is in any way related to Inuit music. I have attempted in this piece, as I do in all my pieces, to synthesize several influences.

MARK SIRETT (b. 1952)
Onokenoga

Note by the composer:

Onokenoga is a soundscape that portrays an ancient Mohawk legend of tragic romance. It was commissioned by the Central Bucks High School West Choir, Dr. Joseph Ohrt, Director, and premiered at the Weston Recital Hall, Toronto Centre for the Performing Arts, on April 28, 2006. The setting for the legend is Lake on the Mountain, Onokenoga, also known as Lake of the Gods. There is no visible source of water and early settlers believed that the lake was bottomless. Over the centuries, there are various legends connected with this beautiful and unusual lake. One such legend is the story of two lovers from rival villages, who late one night meet on the shores of this magical lake and vow their undying love for each other. The young warrior departs for his village on the far shore but a sudden, violent summer storm causes his canoe to overturn and he drowns. Legend has it that the spirit of the young girl continues to wander the shores seeking her lost love in vain.

EINONUHANI RAUTAVAARA (b. 1928)
Suite de Lorca

Finnish composer Einojuhani Rautavaara is well known for his contribution to the choral repertory. The *Suite de Lorca* (1973) sets four poems by the Spanish poet Frederico Garcia Lorca. The first, *Cancion de jinete*, relies on a pedal point in the bass to express the galloping horse on the road to death (Cordoba). In the second, *El Grito*, Rautavaara uses dramatic tone clusters and glissandi to represent the Scream. Pedal point again plays a role as the "people of the caves open their doors and peer." Here, Rautavaara creates a melody of ascending halfsteps against the low pedal sung by the basses. In *La luna asoma*, the shimmering moonlight is heard in the oscillating unisons and halfsteps; its rise over the horizon heard in the ascending thirds of the soprano. *Malagueña* begins with a series of ascending perfect fourths, depicting the open strings of the guitar referred to in Lorca's poem. A repeated ostinato, in the bass drives the piece forward while a series of parallel chords builds intensity as the tenors and finally the altos join the basses in the rhythmic ostinato. Lorca's dark poetry is aptly captured by the composer in these short yet powerful choral songs.

ARVO PÄRT (b. 1935)
Es sang vor langen Jahren

Es sang vor langen Jahren was written in 1984. The German musicologist Diether de la Motte commissioned ten composers to set the 19th century German poet Clemens Brentano's poem of the same name. Arvo Pärt's setting is scored for alto solo, violin and viola. The poem is split in two parts, each receiving a treatment that sees a melody expanding outwards in both directions from the central pitch of E. Each section ends with an arpeggiation of the A minor triad. The text speaks of both human and spiritual love and unity, perhaps realized in the extended instrumental passages for violin and viola.

ALGIRDAS MARTINAITIS (b. 1950)
Alleluia

Alleluia (1996) by Lithuanian composer Algirdas Martinaitis is dedicated to the community of the Bernardines' Church in Vilnius, Lithuania. The four-minute piece develops motivic material of increasing complexity and treats it in overlapping canons. Twice, the rhythmic activity crests before dissolving into a short period of unmeasured, shifting harmony. The singular line of text, sung by the basses, quotes the second verse of Psalm 84: My heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.

IMANT RAMINSH (b. 1943)
Ubi Caritas

Ubi Caritas (1992) was commissioned by Dr. Mark Sirett for the choirs of St. George's Cathedral, Kingston, Ontario. Its text, intended for the Mandatum on Maundy Thursday, is one of devotion, unity and love. Imant Raminsh, creates a quasi-inverted version of the Gregorian melody, made famous by Maurice Duruflé's version of 1960. Raminsh seems to reference this famous motet by setting his version in the same key of E flat major. The chant-like melody moves freely between the soprano and alto voices.

ARVO PÄRT
Bogoroditse Djevo

Bogoroditse Djevo was commissioned by Stephen Cleobury for the choir of King's College, Cambridge. Arvo Pärt's setting from 1990 is a decided departure from the many slow moving tintinnabuli driven pieces for which he is so well known. Energized rhythms and quick changing metres characterize this setting of this Marian advent hymn.

Biographies

Mark Vuorinen is Music Director of the Toronto Chamber Choir, a leading early music choral ensemble. Under his direction the choir continues to provide Toronto audiences with informed performances of seldom heard Renaissance and Baroque Masterworks.

Mark holds a Master of Music degree from Yale University's School of Music and Institute of Sacred Music where he received full scholarship. He is currently a candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Toronto where he regularly conducts the University of Toronto MacMillan Singers.

An active church musician, Mark has served parishes in Southern Ontario and Connecticut and is currently the George Black Fellow in Sacred Music at the Church of the Redeemer, Toronto. In this capacity, he directs a successful Bach Cantata Series that attracts an enthusiastic audience.

Mark is Founding Artistic Director of the Toronto Choral Artists, a new semi-professional ensemble which debuted in early 2009. The mandate of this organization is to champion the works of young and emerging Canadian composers. Since its founding the ensemble has performed world-premieres by Canadian composers Rob Teehan and Elisha Denburg.

A recipient of many awards, Mark was named the E. Stanley Sedar Scholar at Yale University in 2006 and is a past recipient of the Elmer Iseler National Graduate Fellowship in Choral Conducting. Currently, Mark is the recipient of the Women's Musical Club of Toronto Centennial Foundation Graduate Fellowship. In the summer of 2008 Mark received the David and Marcia Beach Summer Study Award from the University of Toronto for studies in Germany with leading Bach scholar and conductor Helmut Rilling. Mark has twice been a finalist in the prestigious Leslie Bell Competition for Choral Conducting, winning an honourable mention in 2000.

Mark's research interests include the study of contemporary choral literature from the Baltic states, and in particular the music of Arvo Pärt and Veljo Tormis. In 2006, Mark was invited by the American Choral Director's Association to present a workshop on this topic to the Connecticut Fall conference in Hartford, CT.

Elaine Choi graduated from the University of Toronto with a Bachelor of Music in Education in 2008. Her music studies began on the piano at the age of two and on the violin at the age of seven. She is currently in her second year of the Master of Music program specializing in conducting under the tutelage of Doreen Rao. An active chamber musician, Elaine is also proficient on the viola and the erhu, a Chinese traditional instrument. She has given many solo performance and workshops on the erhu, including a premiere of *The Moon Reflected in Twin Ponds* by Donald Coakley. As a music educator Elaine works as a part time music teacher, accompanist and assistant conductor at St. Clement's School, The York School and De LaSalle College. Elaine holds an ATCL, AmusTCL diploma in piano performance from the Trinity College of Music, London and an Advanced Certificate from the Associate Board of the Royal Schools of Music, England. Elaine is one of this year's recipients of the Elmer Iseler Fellowship and former recipient of the Lobodowsky Choral Scholarship and the Arthur Redsell Scholarship in Conducting.

The University of Toronto MacMillan Singers was founded in 1994 by Doreen Rao to celebrate the legacy of Sir Ernest MacMillan, an inspired performer and devoted teacher who influenced every aspect of Canada's musical life. This award-winning ensemble conducted by Doreen Rao regularly performs with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra under the direction of Peter Oundjian. The MacMillan Singers enjoy numerous collaborations with Helmuth Rilling, Nexus, the Elmer Iseler Singers and the Gryphon Trio. Recent seasons have included festival performances of Bach Cantatas, Mozart C minor Mass, Stravinsky *Les Noces*, and the Mozart *Requiem*. In October 2007, the MacMillan Singers performed the *St. John Passion* BWV 245 in the Toronto Bach Festival. Last season the MacMillan Singers performed John Burge's *Mass for Prisoners of Conscience* at New York's Lincoln Center.

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